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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Iraq

Iran Islam in Europe Bush Administration and Abortion

PARIS - Thursday, March 09, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Iraq
Iran
Islam in Europe
Bush Administration and Abortion

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Although social strife continues to be a lead story, "The Ethnic Partition of Iraq" (Le Figaro) and Europe's new stance towards immigration, in particular from the Muslim Arab world, are major international stories, to which one must add the bomb attacks in India, the Moussaoui trial, Iran and the Bush administration's "pro-life" policy, which Liberation expounds on at length, in light of the anti abortion legislation passed in South Dakota. Radio commentator Bernard Guetta agrees with Liberation and sees the legislation as reaching farther than just South Dakota. (See Part C)

Le Figaro and Liberation devote major stories to Denmark and the Netherlands' new legislation to control its Muslim immigration: while Le Figaro reports that "Europe would like to close its doors to immigration" and that Great Britain "wants to pick and choose its immigrants" Liberation notes that in the Netherlands, the assassination of Pim Fortuyn has "opened the door to populist and xenophobic (immigration) policies." The editorial in Le Figaro is entitled "Muslim Immigration in Question." (See Part C)

An op-ed in Liberation analyzes Iran's "hidden agenda" and the international community's "double standards" in the nuclear crisis with Iran. (See Part C)

Le Figaro carries a commentary by UK Foreign Secretary Jack Straw entitled "Darfur: Our Patience Has Its Limits." "The only people who have the power to stop (the massacres) are those who sit at the negotiating table in Abuja. They must stop the bargaining and posturing and get down to bringing peace to Darfur, including through a ceasefire, and help bring those responsible for atrocities to justice. The Sudanese ministers. are sitting at the negotiating table, but the leaders of the rebel movements are absent. If they truly want a negotiated solution, they need to go to Abuja. The international community will not leave unpunished those who are guilty of gross violations of human rights or who block the peace process. We know who they are. The UK will not at all feel uncomfortable in denouncing the guilty parties and neither does it exclude having the United Nations declare itself in favor of heavier sanctions, if the parties continue to drag their feet. The International Criminal Court, with the full support of the Security Council, plans to undertake investigations against those responsible for war crimes and violations of human rights in Darfur. It will not hesitate. to look where responsibilities lie. The patience of the international community has its limits."

Le Monde reports that the FBI knew, prior to 9/11, that members of al-Qaeda were training in the U.S. Eric Leser, writes: "The witness for the prosecution, FBI agent Michael Anticev. tended to reinforce the defense's stance more so than help the prosecutor. He confirmed that the American government knew much more than Zacarias Moussaoui about al Qaeda's plans prior to 9/11." Le Parisien mentions Abou Bofana, the "surprise witness" who corroborates the prosecution's position that Moussaoui was planning an attack on the White House.

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Iraq

"Ethnic Partition in the Making in Iraq"

Georges Malbrunot in right-of-center Le Figaro (03/09):

"Slowly but surely the ethnic partition of Iraq is in the making in several sensitive regions of Iraq. It is not yet the grand scale ethnic cleansing of the Balkans. For months now American officials have been haunted by a scenario of doom:

mixed population areas emptying and turning into Shiite or Sunni citadels, and security forces exclusively controlled by Shiite forces facing an Islamic/nationalist guerrilla with the prospect of guaranteed confrontation. Washington is paying the price of its post-war policy, which consisted in punishing the Sunnis and favoring the Shiites and the Kurds. Today, the race is on to beat the clock and a civil war with devastating consequences for the Middle East. To douse the fires of religious discord, the Americans are ready to go back on their dogma, with power being handed to tribal groups. This is a useful buffer against the threat of civil war, and too bad if it is a return to the old Saddam methods."

Iran

"The NPT and Its Indispensable Paradoxes"

Jean-Francois Daguzan in left-of-center Liberation (03/09):

"The dispute with Iran, and the U.S. and French technological offers recently made to India are blurring the picture and send us back to the old notion of double standards. There are strong clues pointing to Iran having cheated. It is up to Iran to prove it is not moving towards proliferation and to accept the IAEA's inspectors. Until proven otherwise, and in accordance with the 'politically incorrect' stance of FM Douste Blazy who denounced Iran's 'clandestine nuclear program,' we must continue to believe that Iran has a hidden agenda. But what we are each offering Iran and North Korea is to return to the old individualistic stance. The tension which is holding together the treaty is fragile, and every movement can either be perceived as positive or negative. Just when the international community seems ready to enter into a tug of war for the common good, Israel, Pakistan and India should also make a step forward."

Islam in Europe

"Muslim Immigration in Question"

Yves Thiebaud in right-of-center Le Figaro (03/09): "An electoral poster in Vienna of a veiled woman and asking 'Is this Our Future?' could well apply to several European countries. Beyond the populist use of these issues by extreme right groups and their posturing, the fact is that all of Europe is looking at its Muslim immigration and asking itself questions, albeit without saying it too crudely. This was a crucial issue in the legislative elections in The Netherlands, and in Great Britain where chosen immigration is making inroads, in Denmark, Italy and Spain. And of course in France. Everywhere the old fear is triggering the same knee-jerk reaction of closing oneself to the rest of the world. Globalization re-enforces nationalism. Turkey's EU membership, the Muhammad caricatures, the riots in France, illegal immigration, the wearing of the Muslim scarf and criminal acts with racial overtones: every time Islam is in the line of fire. Doubts are raised about whether Islam is compatible with our values. If we want to stop radicalization, xenophobia and intolerance, we must act urgently. Because the trend is spreading dangerously: it is no longer the prerogative of a limited few. Chosen immigration, which is being encouraged by the EU Commission, has yet to demonstrate its advantages. But it will not resolve everything: many Muslims living in Europe are nationals of their countries. We must revive secularism. It is the best antidote to hysteria between communities. It is the engine for integration. As is learning the language of the host country, and respecting its laws."

Bush Administration and Abortion

"Crusade"

Patrick Sabatier in left-of-center Liberation (03/09): "It would be a mistake to ignore a law banning abortion voted in a rural and distant American state. and not only because the vote, which came on the eve of International Women's Day, adds provocation to stupidity. This anti-abortion law does not concern South Dakota alone. It targets all of the U.S. For the past thirty-three years, anti-abortion lobbyists have tried to reverse America's abortion legislation. They think their hour is near. They are betting on the replacement of liberal or moderate Supreme Court justices by the Bush administration with conservatives. If the Supreme Court were to reverse the abortion legislation, it would have repercussions worldwide. When it comes to morals and culture, the wind often blows from the U.S. onto our shores. President Bush, spurred by the 'Christian right' is already waging an anti-abortion crusade worldwide. He is making anti-abortion legislation a condition for aid to poor and developing countries. This crusade will intensify if the right to abortion was questioned in the U.S."

"An American Crusade Against Abortion"

Bernard Guetta on government-run France Inter radio (03/09):

"Governor Rounds has signed a legislation that goes well beyond the boundaries of his state. He has launched a national battle. in the hopes that the Supreme Court will reverse the 1973 Roe versus Wade decision." STAPLETON